

health insurance thanks to the ACA, and the ACA reduced health care spending a total of \$2.3 trillion between 2010 and 2017.

As a senior member of the Health Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee, Xavier Becerra played a significant role to help write and pass the ACA and defended the law from near continuous Republican assault as California's attorney general. Most recently, he has been leading litigation at the Supreme Court to reinstate the ACA after an ideologically-driven district court judge struck down the law in its entirety.

These efforts demonstrate the leadership, experience, and health policy expertise Xavier will bring to the Department of Health and Human Services.

Despite these bona fides, Republican Senators are actively smearing Xavier's reputation and misrepresenting his qualifications to prevent him from becoming the first Latino to serve as HHS Secretary.

First, they claim Xavier isn't qualified because he isn't a doctor. Republicans clearly didn't believe this was a deal breaker when all but one of them voted to confirm Alex Azar—a former executive at Eli Lilly—as Donald Trump's HHS Secretary. I think most Americans would rather have an HHS Secretary like Xavier Becerra, who successfully sued hospitals to lower healthcare costs, than a person in charge of running a pharmaceutical company. Republicans have also claimed that Xavier lacks "extensive health care experience." This is particularly rich coming from the same people who voted to confirm Betsy DeVos to become Education Secretary. She not only had never worked in a public school, she had never even attended one. These same Republicans voted to confirm Rick Perry to become Energy Secretary, when he didn't even know the Department of Energy was responsible for the Nation's nuclear arsenal.

Throughout his 12 terms in the House of Representatives, Xavier Becerra was a leader on health policy issues. He helped write the most sweeping change to our healthcare system in more than a generation, and now, as the California attorney general, he is defending that law in court. He has the experience needed to lead the Department of Health and Human Services.

Republicans are also attacking Xavier's nomination on the grounds that he is somehow "extreme" and "a radical" because he supports a woman's right to have an abortion. The Supreme Court first recognized a woman's constitutional right to an abortion in 1973. That is nearly 50 years ago. Supporting this fundamental right is anything but radical, it is a position shared by almost 70 percent of the American people. But that hasn't stopped attacks on a woman's right to seek and have one.

What is "extreme" and "radical" are Republican efforts to undermine this right—if not completely eliminate it.

Just last week, the Republican Governor of Arkansas signed a law that bans all abortions unless they are necessary to save the life of the mother. This law is directly contrary to the Supreme Court's command that States cannot prohibit abortion prior to viability. It does not even include an exception for pregnancies that are the result of rape or incest.

The junior senator from Arkansas has called Xavier Becerra "extreme" and "a radical" for defending a woman's constitutional right to an abortion, while his State wants to force women who have been raped to carry their pregnancies to term. What planet are we living on?

On Thursday night, Xavier Becerra will be confirmed to become the next Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services. In any normal world, the vote would be bipartisan and it would be overwhelming. I strongly support his nomination and call on my colleagues to do so as well.●

(At the request of Mr. Schumer, the following statement was ordered to be printed in the RECORD.)

#### VOTE EXPLANATION

● Ms. HIRONO. Madam President, I was necessarily absent for votes on March 18, 2021, so I could return to Hawaii to tend to a family matter.

On March 18, had I been present, I would have voted yea on confirmation: Xavier Becerra, of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, rollcall vote 125.

Madam President, I was necessarily absent for votes on March 18, 2021, so I could return to Hawaii to tend to a family matter.

On March 18, had I been present, I would have voted yea on cloture motion: Martin Joseph Walsh, of Massachusetts, to be Secretary of Labor, rollcall vote 126.●

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### RECOGNIZING LaGRANGE HIGH SCHOOL

● Mr. CASSIDY. Madam President, I rise today to speak to the fortitude of the students, faculty, and staff of LaGrange High School. Located in Lake Charles, LA, LaGrange High School educates over 1,000 students and is led by their Principal Monica Guillory. As you may know, on top of a global pandemic, southwest Louisiana was ravaged by two major hurricanes last year. In most cases, people would try to return to some sense of normalcy or return to the status quo following a deadly virus and multiple natural disasters. However, the LaGrange High School girls' basketball team, known as the Lady Gators, would not accept the status quo. Led by head coach La'Keem Holmes, and assistant coaches Patrick Woodard, Sharde Henry, and Sean Andress, these ladies carried their

school and community through troubled waters and became back-to-back Class 4A State champions. This is the first school in the Lake Charles area to be State champions back-to-back. These young women gave their community something to rally behind during hard times, the purple and white. What a gift that is. It is my honor to visit them and learn of all the great things they are accomplishing.●

##### RECOGNIZING OSHER LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

● Mr. KAINE. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University, OLLI Mason, its 30th anniversary and on its continuing success in offering educational programming for older Americans in Northern Virginia. Programs like OLLI Mason provide lifelong learning opportunities for seniors interested in maintaining an active intellectual life.

The Learning in Retirement Institute was founded in 1991 to establish educational and social opportunities for a growing base of seniors in Northern Virginia. The Institute soon became affiliated with George Mason University as part of Mason's vision to extend its learning mission in the community. The institute was generously endowed by the Bernard Osher Foundation, a nonprofit that is dedicated to enhancing quality of life in the United States through education and the arts.

What started two decades ago as a member-run Learning in Retirement Center with 100 members operating and teaching out of one room in Mason's Commerce II Building has burgeoned today into a robust, first-rate educational and social institute with 1,100 members.

OLLI Mason's mission is "to offer its members learning opportunities in a stimulating environment in which adults can share their talents, experiences and skills, explore new interests, discover and develop latent abilities, engage in intellectual and cultural pursuits, and socialize with others of similar interests." OLLI Mason has fulfilled this mission by offering retirees in Northern Virginia over 600 courses from arts to zoology, religion to science, as well as excursions and special events.

As the over 50 population across the Commonwealth continues to live longer and healthier lives, I am pleased to recognize OLLI, George Mason University, and the County of Fairfax for their initiative in foreseeing decades ago the critical need to offer programs that meet the needs, expand opportunities, and enhance the quality of life for older Americans across Northern Virginia. I look forward to many more years of their programming success.●